

Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00
SCS-06 CA-01 L-03 INSE-00 /049 W
-----094674 120845Z /13

R 120730Z APR 78
FM AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0049
INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SINGAPORE 1656

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: SREF, VM, AS
SUBJ: ACTIVITIES OF BOBBY ALLEN WITH VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

REF: A. CANBERRA 2628, B. KUALA LUMPUR 2780 AND PREVIOUS

1. SUMMARY: DCM HELD DISCUSSION APRIL 11 WITH AMCIT
BOBBY ALLEN REGARDING LATTER'S ACTIVITIES WITH
VIETNAMESE REFUGEES IN MALAYSIAN CAMPS AND HIS
REPORTED PLAN TO RESCUE HIS WIFE FROM VIETNAM. RESULTS
WERE INCONCLUSIVE. END SUMMARY.

2. DCM FIRST ASKED ALLEN WHETHER HE HAD BEEN ASSISTING
AND ENCOURAGING REFUGEES IN MALAYSIAN CAMPS TO LEAVE
FOR AUSTRALIA. ALLEN FREELY CONCEDED THAT HE HAD DONE
SO AND VOLUNTEERED THAT HE HAD TAKEN PART IN PREPARATIONS
FOR TRAVEL OF VNSG 1028 TO DARWIN. THERE WERE TWO
PRIMARY REASONS WHY REFUGEES IN CAMPS WERE LEAVING FOR
AUSTRALIA, HE SAID. FIRST, MANY HAD BEEN IN CAMPS FOR
UP TO A YEAR AND DESPAIRED OF GETTING OUT ANY OTHER WAY.
SECOND, SOME OF ARRIVING REFUGEES HAD REACHED
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MALAYSIA IN BOATS WHICH THEY HAD STOLEN OR HIJACKED
IN VIETNAM, IN SOME CASES VIOLENTLY. KNOWING THAT
MALAYSIAN GOVERNMENT HAD ESTABLISHED RELATIONS WITH
HANOI, THESE REFUGEES FEARED THEY WOULD BE RETURNED
TO VIETNAM OR IMPRISONED IN MALAYSIA IF MALAYSIAN
AUTHORITIES LEARNED HOW THEY HAD OBTAINED BOATS. HE
HAD NO QUALMS ABOUT ASSISTING REFUGEES TO LEAVE CAMPS

FOR AUSTRALIA, ALLEN ASSERTED, SINCE TRIP WAS AN EASY ONE. SEAS WERE ALMOST INVARIABLY CALM, THERE WERE FEW NAVIGATIONAL PROBLEMS AND ONLY REAL HAZARD FACED BY REFUGEES WAS PRESENCE OF "INDONESIAN PIRATES" WHO PREYED ON REFUGEE BOATS AT VARIOUS PLACES ALONG THE WAY.

3. DCM STRESSED TO ALLEN THAT HIS ACTIVITIES, HOWEVER WELL-MEANING, RISKED SERIOUSLY DISRUPTING ENTIRE REFUGEE PROGRAM. NUMBER OF GOVERNMENTS AND UNHCR WERE ENGAGED IN MASSIVE EFFORT TO MOVE THESE REFUGEES. EVEN THOUGH IT MAY SEEM TO OBSERVERS ON THE SPOT THAT MOVEMENT WAS PAINFULLY SLOW, PROGRESS WAS BEING MADE. MOREOVER, PLANNING WAS UNDERWAY IN US AND OTHER COUNTRIES FOR STILL GREATER EFFORT. BOTH CURRENT OPERATIONS AND, ESPECIALLY, FUTURE PLANNING WOULD BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED IF REFUGEES CONTINUED TO LEAVE MALAYSIAN CAMPS ON THEIR OWN FOR AUSTRALIA. AUSTRALIA'S OWN RELATIVELY MAJOR EFFORT, IN PARTICULAR, WAS BEING JEOPARDIZED BY THIS IRRESPONSIBLE ACTIVITY. IF IT CONTINUED, REFUGEES THEMSELVES WERE THE ONES WHO WOULD SUFFER. SOME MIGHT EVEN FIND THEMSELVES BACK IN THE MALAYSIAN CAMPS, FARTHER DOWN THE LIST THAN EVER. ALLEN LISTENED SERIOUSLY TO FOREGOING AND SAID HE WOULD CONSIDER DCM'S WARNING, BUT DID NOT AGREE TO CEASE ACTIVITIES DESPITE DCM'S PRESSING HIM TO DO SO.

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4. DCM THEN NOTED REPORTS THAT ALLEN WAS PLANNING TO RETURN TO VIETNAM TO ASSIST HIS WIFE IN ESCAPING AND ASKED WHETHER THEY WERE TRUE. ALLEN CONFIRMED THAT HE WAS SEEKING TO GET HIS WIFE AND HER FAMILY OUT OF VIETNAM, BUT STORY HE TOLD DIFFERED SOMEWHAT FROM THAT PREVIOUSLY REPORTED. FIRST OF ALL, HE SAID, HE WAS STILL ACTIVELY SEEKING TO GET A LEGAL EXIT PERMIT FOR HIS WIFE, WORKING THROUGH FRENCH AND GERMAN SOURCES IN VIETNAM. PAPERS HAD BEEN SUBMITTED TO SRV AUTHORITIES, BRIBES HAD BEEN PAID TO APPROPRIATE PERSONS, AND ALLEN FELT THERE WAS FAIR CHANCE WIFE MIGHT BE LEGALLY PERMITTED TO LEAVE VIETNAM BY SUMMER 1978. HE WAS PREPARED TO CONTINUE THESE EFFORTS AND TAKE NO FURTHER ACTION UNTIL SUMMER.

5. IF WIFE COULD NOT LEAVE COUNTRY LEGALLY, HE WAS MAKING CONTINGENCY PLANS TO GET HER OUT BY BOAT. HE HAD BOUGHT A 50-FOOT BOAT WITH 150 HORSEPOWER ENGINE FROM VIETNAMESE REFUGEE AND HAD HAD IT LEGALLY REGISTERED IN HIS NAME. BOAT HAD BEEN EQUIPPED WITH RADAR AND OTHER NAVIGATIONAL DEVICES. HIS PLAN TO EFFECT WIFE'S ESCAPE WAS AS FOLLOWS: HE WOULD LEAVE

MALAYSIAN WATERS, TALLING EVERYONE HE WAS SAILING TO HONG KONG, WHICH HE WOULD ACTUALLY DO. ENROUTE TO HONG KONG, HE WOULD PROCEED ALONG COAST TO VIETNAM JUST OUTSIDE 12-MILE LIMIT. AT PRE-ARRANGED TIME AND PLACE, WIFE AND FAMILY WOULD LEAVE VIETNAM IN SMALL BOAT AND RENDEVOUS WITH HIM IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS. HE WOULD THEN TAKE THEM ON TO HONG KONG. HE HAD NO INTENTION OF ENTERING VIETNAMESE WATERS, HE EMPHASIZED, AND HE HAD SUFFICIENT NAVIGATIONAL EQUIPMENT TO ASSURE THAT HE WOULD NOT DO SO INADVERTENTLY.

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6. DCM SAID THAT SCHEME WAS A DANGEROUS ONE WITH MANIFOLD POSSIBILITIES OF FAILURE, AND SUGGESTED STRONGLY THAT HE NOT ATTEMPT TO CARRY IT OUT. ALLEN RESPONDED THAT HE SAW NO ALTERNATIVE IF EFFORTS TO GET WIFE OUT OF VIETNAM LEGALLY FAILED. HE ASKED WHAT USG COULD DO IN HIS BEHALF IF HE WERE CAPTURED BY VIETNAMESE IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS. "COULDN'T THE 'KITTY HAWK' COME TO MY AID?" DCM SAID THAT, IN PRACTICAL TERMS THERE WAS VERY LITTLE THAT WE COULD DO EVEN IF HE WERE CAPTURED IN INTERNATIONAL WATERS.

7. ALLEN OBSERVED THAT USG APPARENTLY HAD BEEN ABLE TO ARRANGE RELEASE OF THE YACHT "BRILLIG". DCM COMMENTED THAT SITUATION WAS ENTIRELY DIFFERENT, THAT "BRILLIG" CREW WAS NOT ENGAGED IN ANY ACTIVITY INVOLVING VIETNAMESE AND APPARENTLY HAD BEEN RELEASED ONLY WHEN VIETNAMESE CONVINCED SELVES THAT THIS WAS

THE CASE. THIS OBVIOUSLY WOULD NOT APPLY TO ALLEN IF HE FELL INTO VIETNAMESE HANDS. DCM AGAIN ADVISED ALLEN TO GIVE UP HIS SCHEME. ALLEN, EXPRESSING APPRECIATION FOR OFFICIAL INTEREST IN HIS WELFARE, POLITELY CONFIDENTIAL

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DECLINED.

8. ALLEN WAS VAGUE AND SOMEWHAT EVASIVE REGARDING HIS OWN POSITION IN MALAYSIA. HE CLAIMED TO BE "WORKING FOR THE RED CROSS" (MALAYSIAN, HE SAID, NOT AMERICAN) BUT ADDED THAT HE WAS NOT A SALARIED EMPLOYEE. ALL HE RECEIVED FROM THE RED CROSS WAS ROOM AND BOARD AT REFUGEE CAMPS. HE WAS OBVIOUSLY KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT REFUGEE CAMP OPERATIONS AND CLAIMED PERSONAL ACQUAINTANCE WITH MALAYSIAN AUTHORITIES, UNHCR PERSONNEL, AND THIRD COUNTRY REPRESENTATIVES INVOLVED.

9. DCM FOUND ALLEN PLEASANT, GENERALLY RESPONSIVE, AND SOMEWHAT IRRESPONSIBLE. HE CLAIMED THAT REFUGEES IN CAMPS LOOK TO HIM FOR ADVICE AND COUNCIL, AND THIS OBVIOUSLY FEEDS HIS SELF-ESTEEM. HE IS CERTAINLY CAPABLE OF DISSEMBLING, AND IT IS HARD TO DETERMINE JUST HOW MUCH OF HIS STORIES ARE BASED ON FACT.

10. ON DEPARTING, ALLEN (FOR WHAT IS IT WORTH) AGREED TO KEEP IN TOUCH WITH EMBASSY AND TO CONSIDER SERIOUSLY POINTS DCM HAD MADE REGARDING ENCOURAGEMENT OF REFUGEES TO TRAVEL TO AUSTRALIA.

11. FOR KUALA LUMPUR: IN COURSE OF CONVERSATION, ALLEN ASKED IF WE COULD GIVE HIM INDICATION OF MALAYSIA POLICY TOWARD THOSE REFUGEES WHO (AS DESCRIBED PARA 2 ABOVE) HAD STOLEN OR HIJACKED VIETNAMESE BOATS TO GET TO MALAYSIA. IF HE COULD ASSURE REFUGEES THAT MALAYSIAN AUTHORITIES WOULD NOT MOVE AGAINST THEM, THEY WOULD BE LESS EAGER TO MOVE ON TO AUSTRALIA. DCM REPLIED THAT HE HAD NO INFORMATION ON MALAYSIA POLICY
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IN THIS REGARD BUT WOULD INQUIRE. IF EMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR HAS ANY INFORMATION IN THIS REGARD THAT IT FEELS MIGHT BE PASSED TO ALLEN, PLEASE LET US KNOW.
HOLDRIDGE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 apr 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978SINGAP01656
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780157-0132
Format: TEL
From: SINGAPORE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780463/aaaacbg1.tel
Line Count: 223
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: b2033ab1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION HA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 CANBERRA 2628, 78 KUALA LUMPUR 2780
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 06 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2987184
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ACTIVITIES OF BOBBY ALLEN WITH VIETNAMESE REFUGEES
TAGS: SREF, VM, AS, (ALLEN, BOBBY)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/b2033ab1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014